

People - Bennett

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Presentation of Article 22

I was pleased to be asked by Joe Grady to address this article. I had enjoyed my 6 years on the Conservation Commission and I have a great deal of appreciation for those who had served before me and particularly for someone who was so instrumental in establishing the Commission as an integral part of the town of Duxbury.

Dr. Bennett served on the Conservation Commission from 1967 to 1979, 12 years, serving as its Chairman for 10 of those years. Anyone who has served on a committee and accepted the additional responsibility as a chairman can appreciate Dr. Bennett's dedication to serve as chair for 10 consecutive years. When he accepted the chair, the Con Comm had acquired to date only 109.79 acres and by the end of his 10 years of service, the Con Comm owned 1,340 acres! While this stands as a significant accomplishment, it's really how he led the movement that is so impressive. He worked cooperatively with other town committees, most notably the Planning Board, securing passage of the Green Belt Plan and adoption of the Wetlands and Watershed Protection District Bylaw. He was instrumental in the establishment of The Friends of Conservation who continue their good work today. He reached out to the schools with poster contests and educational programs. And I am sorry that I did not hear his speech to the 1970 Annual Town Meeting, which spoke of what the value of the last Osprey might be.

His word and the words of others help convey the impact Dr. Bennett had on the conservation movement:

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* Paul Arsenian

The following is from . . .

~~(This was)~~ an article in The Clipper around 1970 entitled, "A Commitment to Conservation" written by Dr. Bennett:

"Consider, as the Conservation Committee did, what would you seek to conserve in Duxbury to preserve its uniqueness? What makes this the town you selected for a home? Probably no one will disagree that the ocean, the beach, the bay and the coastal marshes make Duxbury superior to other coastal towns. Perhaps you live on a tidal river, the Blue Fish or Eagle's Nest, or you grow cranberries. Perhaps you enjoy the quiet of the woods, the autumn foliage, the birds, or the streams and the ponds. In this you share a bond with the early settlers from Plymouth who came here for the very same reasons. It is a pleasant place to live because of these things. Are you now willing to do something to conserve these assets, or will you stand by and watch the common heritage vanish?"

An excerpt from Dr. Bennett's 1969 Annual Report to the Town of Duxbury:

"In all its deliberations and efforts, the Commission has attempted to maintain its appreciation of the diverse meanings of 'Conservation.' To some people conservation means, quiet enjoyment of open space, room to be alone in, protection of water resources, or simply a view of the bay across a meadow. To others it means environmental protection, controlled growth rate, and maintenance of the quality of life we enjoy in Duxbury. Whatever it means, the fact remains that Duxbury must

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begin to conserve itself more thoughtfully and more vigorously. The cost can only be measured by asking, 'What will it cost if we do not conserve ourselves?'"

From the 1970 report— his often asked three questions:

1. Why Do You Live In Duxbury?
2. Are You Willing To Do Something Positive To Maintain The Character Of Duxbury?
3. Can You Afford, Environmentally, and Financially Not To Do Something?

Only You can conserve Duxbury, nobody is going to do it for you.

An Article from The Clipper, date uncertain, by Dr. Bennett:

"If you want to conserve the rural charm of Duxbury set the land aside now or forget about it. The proposed Green Belts are the last chance to do something positive and we urge the town to approve the Planning Board's program along these lines. With or without such approval the Commission intends to proceed to establish these belts by urging the owners of property involved to agree to negative easements on the portions of their lands affected. The voluntary establishment of such an area will be the first of its kind and extent in Massachusetts. There are flood plain belts along larger rivers in the state but nothing resembling this type of conservation project."

In a letter written for the Clipper after Dr. Bennett's untimely death, Nancy Anne Dawe said the following:

"The depth and scope of his work were astonishing. Aided by townspeople drawn by his magnetism, he oversaw the town's commitment to conservation, thus preserving in perpetuity its irreplaceable salt-marshes, inland forests and waterways, and ensuring that future generations enjoyed the beauty that the Pilgrims John and Priscilla Alden has found there in colonial days."

Dr. Lansing Bennett through his intelligence, dedication and apparently his inspiration, made a lasting impact on the town of Duxbury that not only continues today but also will be felt for generations to come. The 344 acres that comprise the Trout Farm Woods was one of his most satisfying acquisitions. The renaming of that parcel to the Lansing Bennett Forest is a fitting tribute to a dedicated and unparalleled public servant. On behalf of the Con Com, I urge your support of Article 22.

This entry was an address to the Town of Duxbury's Annual Town Meeting in March of 2005 by Friend Weiler, former selectman. The article was approved by the town meeting.
---Judith Sime, April 13, 2005